

**MIND YOURSELF**



**STRIKE FORCE**  
ALL STAR CHEER

**“It’s ok  
not to be  
ok”**

Over the past few weeks we have practiced good hygiene, learned about social distancing, and realised the importance of moving our bodies to stay physically healthy, but we also need to make sure we are maintaining positive mental health at this difficult time.

### What is mental health?

“Mental health” means having a general sense of well-being and being able to reach your potential. It means you can cope with life’s normal stresses, work productively, and participate in community life.

For most of us, our mental health has been impacted in some way during this emergency. Not being able to see our friends, or visit our vulnerable relatives, plans and celebrations being cancelled, etc. has left many of us feeling isolated, agitated and alone. According to the HSE, you may be experiencing some of the following because of Covid-19:

- increased anxiety
- feeling stressed
- finding yourself excessively checking for symptoms, in yourself, or others
- becoming irritable more easily
- feeling insecure or unsettled
- fearing that normal aches and pains might be the virus
- having trouble sleeping
- feeling helpless or feeling a lack of control

All these feelings are completely normal. Although these feelings are uncomfortable, they are an appropriate reaction to what’s going on around us.

# How can we manage the normal anxiety we are feeling in response to a difficult time?

**1. Talk it Out:** It is perfectly normal to feel anxious or experience low mood while we practice social distancing. If you have a friend, family member, a trusted adult, or even your GP to turn to, discuss how you're feeling. Sometimes just verbalizing what's going on in your head can be a great sense of comfort (Pieta, 2020).

**2. Self Talk:** If you don't feel comfortable talking to someone about your feelings, practice positive "Self Talk". Flood your brain with positive thoughts when the negative thoughts start to overwhelm your internal dialogue. You can remind yourself the feeling is temporary and will pass! Distract yourself with thoughts of your "happy place" or a time where you felt safe. Repeat positive affirmations like "I am safe" and "I will get through this".

**3. Cognitive reframing:** This big fancy psychological term means to replace the bad thoughts you have with good ones! For example, instead of thinking you are "stuck" in the house, replace that thought with how you are helping to stop the spread of Covid-19 in your community, and that you are safe at home. While there are so many fun activities we cannot do right now, make a list of all the things we CAN do now! We might not have control over Covid-19, but we do have control over our actions and what we will do with our new spare time! We can read that book we put aside, or we can take up a new hobby like yoga or crafting! (Carson, 2020).

**4. Mindfulness:** "Mindfulness" is a fancy word meaning to stay in the moment. Staying focused on the very minute you are in can help you get rid of those bad feelings. Focus on just the now. Take a few breaths. What can I hear? What can I see? What can I feel? There are plenty of guided meditations you can access on Youtube to try, ranging from 5 minutes to hour long sessions.

**5. Exercise:** Exercise can help boost the good feelings in our brains (endorphins) and get rid of the bad feelings we may be experiencing (anxiety) and help us get a better night's sleep. Logging into your dance and drama classes is also a great way to stay connected with your friends!

**6. Schooling:** While it is important to continue to prepare for exams and the leaving cert, remember to be kind to yourself. E-learning is hugely different from being in a classroom environment. If you are not adjusting quickly to the new systems and independent study times, be gentle and patient with yourself as you settle in. Don't be afraid to ask for help from your teachers, school counsellors and administrators who are all still working hard to support their students if you are finding it difficult!

**7. Social Media:** While social media can seem like a great distraction and a way to stay connected with our friends, be mindful of how much time you are spending on your phone and the type of content you are consuming. Is the content negative? Are you seeing an overwhelming amount of information about Covid-19? Check in with yourself/your mood and take a break from social media. Make sure if you are spending a huge amount of time on your socials, you flood your timeline with things that make you happy like baby animals, body positivity accounts or tutorials that motivate you.

**8. Routines:** All this new spare time can be overwhelming when we are used to being so busy. Try and create a realistic routine that works for you. Be consistent with bedtimes and wake times. Set time aside for normal daily tasks (i.e. showering, eating), physical activity and housework, social activity, creative activities, and school work (Department of Education and Skills, 2020). Keeping a routine will help us manage what is in our control: our time.

# Resources Available

While it feels like every shop is closed, remember, there are still many services in Cork that are still up and running and willing to help us!

**Never hesitate to ask for help!**

## Physical Health:

If you feel sick, you can still ring your local GP or South Doc for phone consultations or they may ask you to come in.

## Mental Health:

**Alone:** Alone is a service for older people who might be having a hard time. If you're worried about a grandparent or neighbour, you can pass on their telephone number.

Phone: 0818 222 024

**BeLonGTo:** LGBTQI support service and helpline. This service specifically supports members of this community.

Phone: 1890 929 539

Website: <https://www.belongto.org/>

**Childline:** Childline is open 24 hours a day. They are a service which supports young people up to 18 years old about anything that is on your mind. You don't need a reason to ring them, you can even contact them if you feel lonely!

Text: 50101

Phone: 1800 66 66 66

Website: <https://www.childline.ie/>

**SpunOut.ie** - This service is online resource for young people of Ireland that will provide them information and contacts for anyone who needs assistance.

Website: [www.spunout.ie](http://www.spunout.ie)

**HelpLink Mental Health:** This service is providing low cost online counselling across Ireland, ranging from 20-30 euro.

**Phone:** 091 759887

**Website:** <https://helplink.ie/counselling/online-counselling-nationwide/>

**Jigsaw Dublin :** While their face to face service has been suspended, they have a website designed for young people (12-25) about how to manage stress and mental health issues.

**Website:** <https://jigsawonline.ie/coronavirus-and-youth-mental-health/>

**Pieta House :** Pieta House provides a professional one-to-one therapeutic service to people who are in suicidal distress, those who engage in self-harm, and those bereaved by suicide. All of their services are provided free of charge and no referral is needed. In addition, a 24/7 helpline is in operation, as well as text support.

**Helpline:** 1800 247 247

**Text:** HELP to 51444

**Website:** <https://www.pieta.ie/>

**Samaritans:** You can contact Samaritans about “anything that’s troubling you, no matter how large or small the issue feels” 24 hours a day.

**Call:** 116 123

**Women’s Aid:** Women’s Aid can help you if you are experiencing domestic violence. They give advice on how you can help yourself and others. You can also contact them 24 hours-a-day on **1800 341 900**. (If you are under 18 contact Childline for advice or ring the guards **999/112**).

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